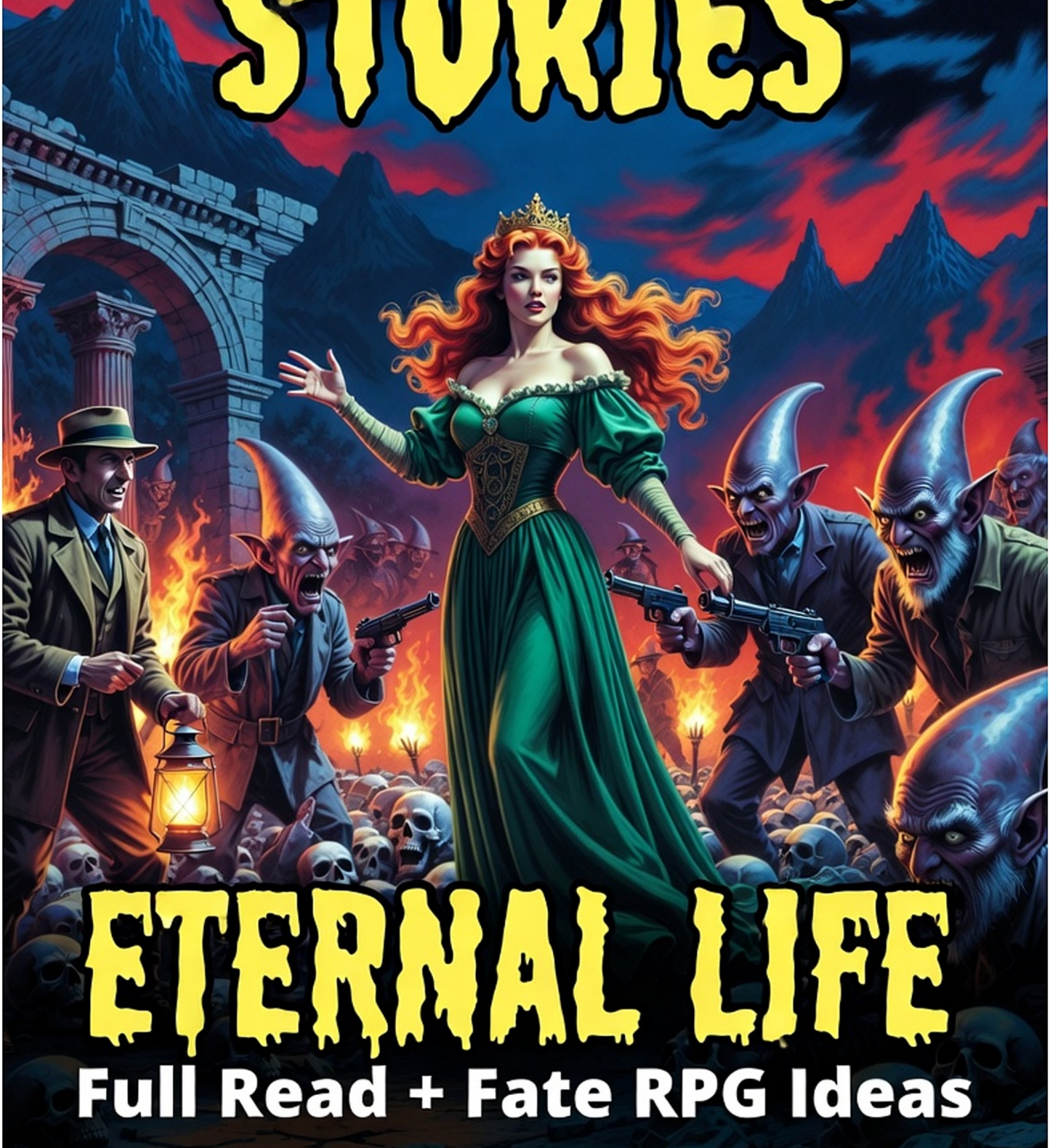
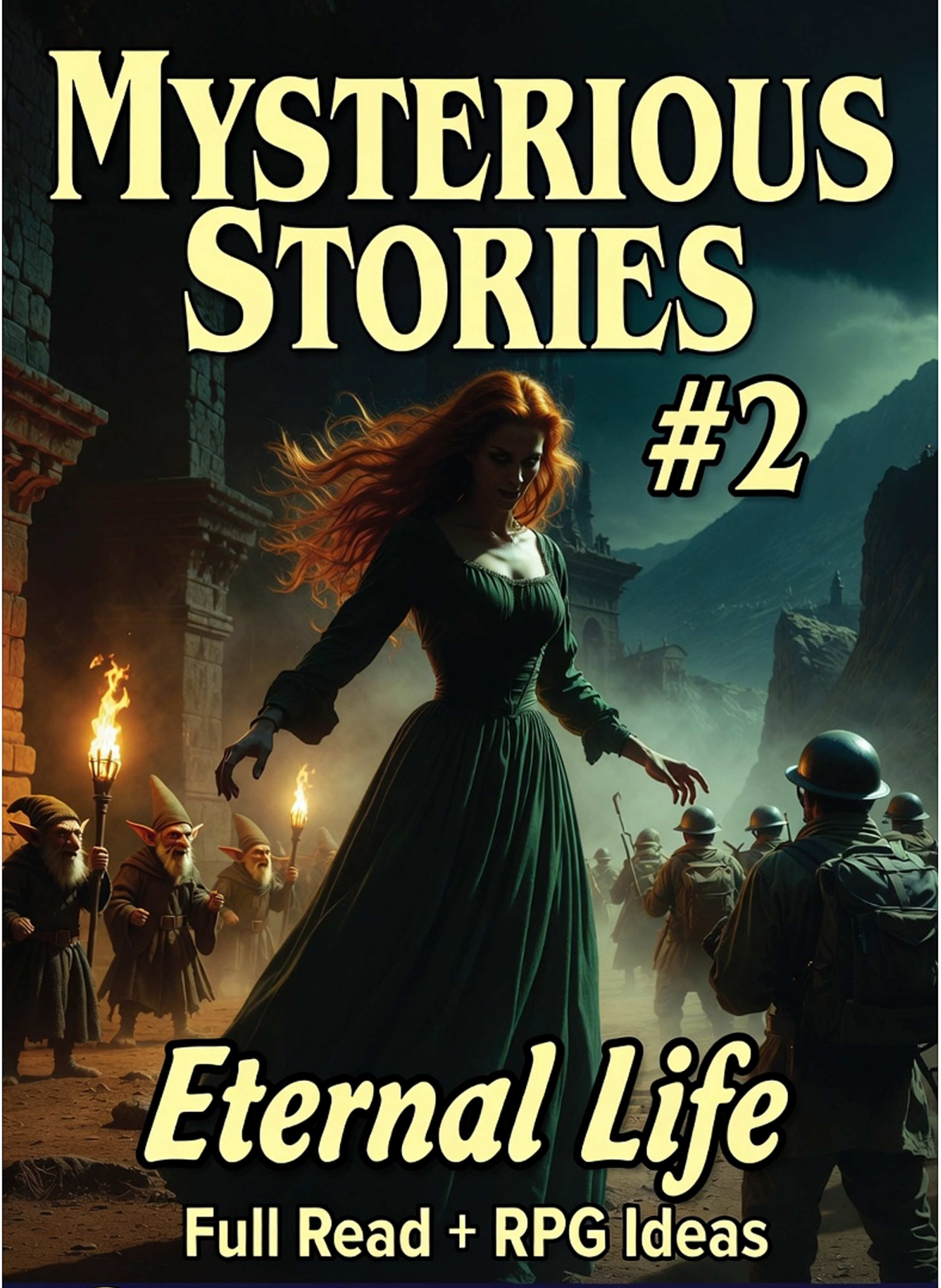
MYSTERIOUS STORIES



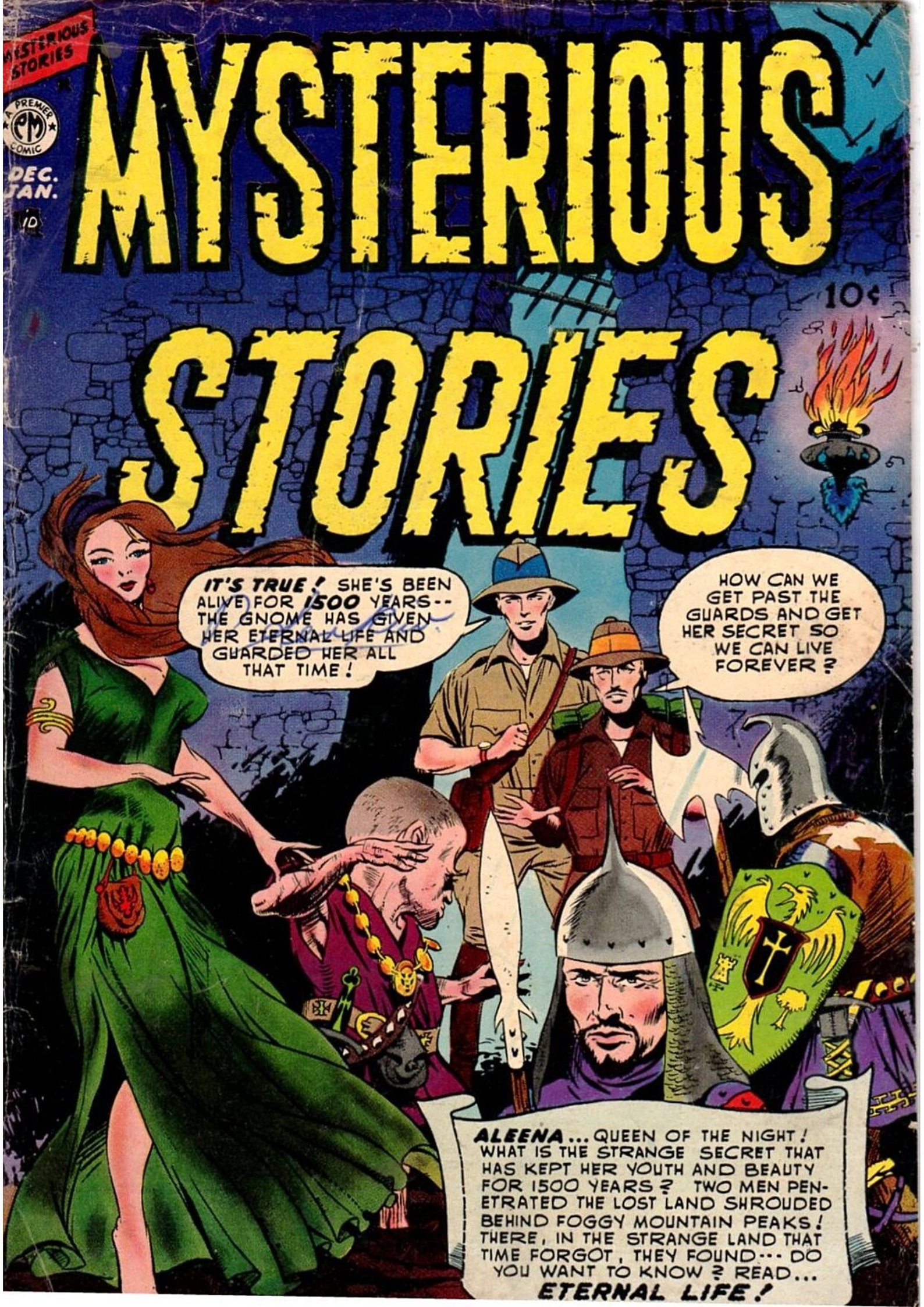
ETERNAL LIFE

Full Read + Fate RPG Ideas



SL Tonight

SUNDAY @ 11PM ET


MYSTERIOUS STORIES
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MYSTERIOUS STORIES
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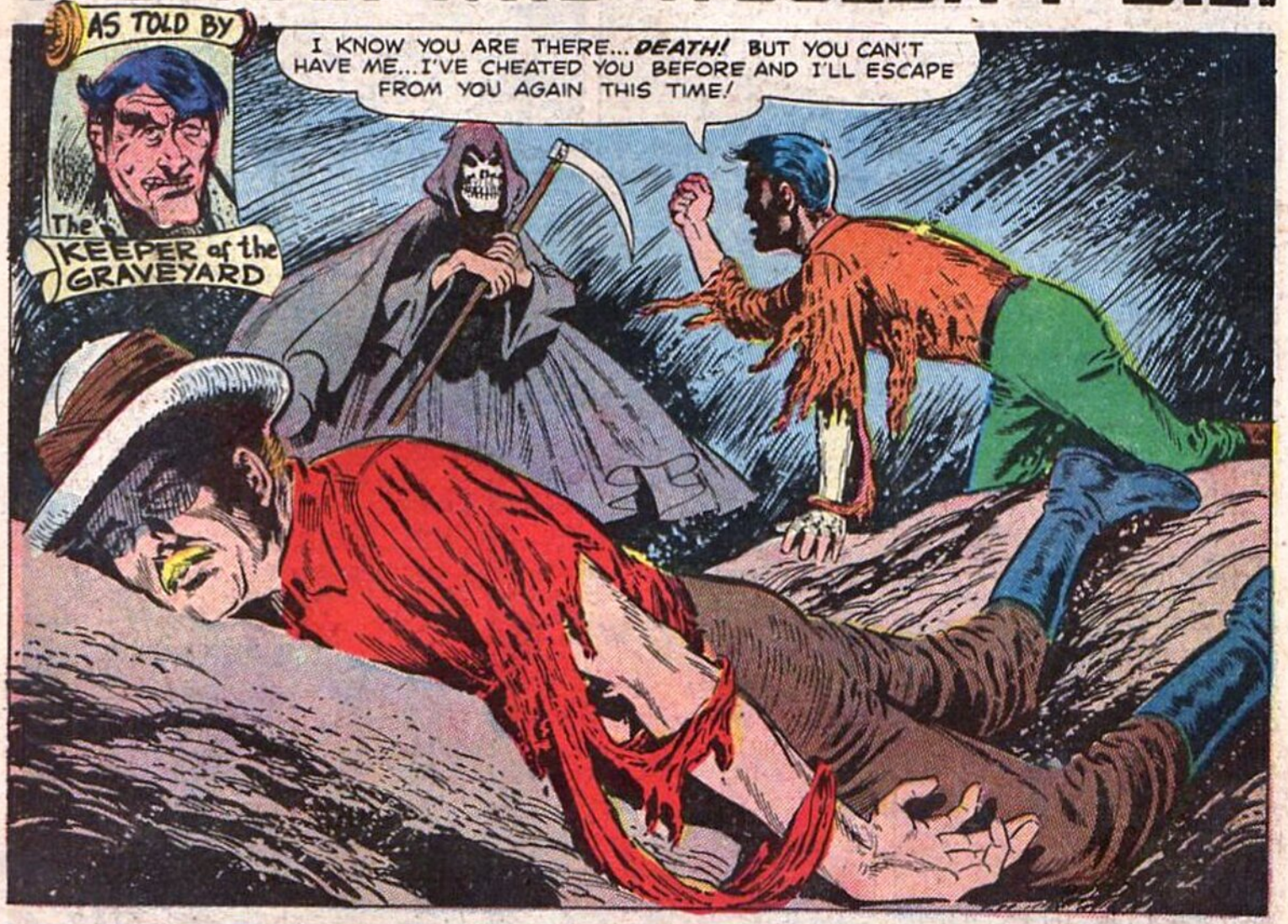
IT'S TRUE! SHE'S BEEN ALIVE FOR 1500 YEARS -- THE GNOME HAS GIVEN HER ETERNAL LIFE AND GUARDED HER ALL THAT TIME!
HOW CAN WE GET PAST THE GUARDS AND GET HER SECRET SO WE CAN LIVE FOREVER?
ALEENA... QUEEN OF THE NIGHT! WHAT IS THE STRANGE SECRET THAT HAS KEPT HER YOUTH AND BEAUTY FOR 1500 YEARS? TWO MEN PENETRATED THE LOST LAND SHROUDED BEHIND FOGGY MOUNTAIN PEAKS! THERE, IN THE STRANGE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT, THEY FOUND--- DO YOU WANT TO KNOW? READ...
ETERNAL LIFE!

AFRAID TO DIE, MYSTERY LOVERS? WANT TO LIVE FOREVER, EH? THEN THIS LITTLE SAGA OF STRANGE ADVENTURE IS FOR YOU! COME WITH US TO THE MIGHTY SAHARA DESERT, LAND OF SUN, SAND, SURPRISE AND SUSPENSE! THIS TORMENTED TALE WILL KEEP YOU SHAKING WITH DELIGHT AS YOU READ OF...

THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T DIE!


AS TOLD BY
The KEEPER of the GRAVEYARD
I KNOW YOU ARE THERE... DEATH! BUT YOU CAN'T HAVE ME... I'VE CHEATED YOU BEFORE AND I'LL ESCAPE FROM YOU AGAIN THIS TIME!

IT IS NOVEMBER OF 1954 WHEN DON CHESTER, AND PROFESSOR ALLAN MORSE START ON THEIR JOURNEY ACROSS THE VAST SAHARA. THEIR ONLY OBJECT IS A LEISURELY TWO-MONTHS VACATION...

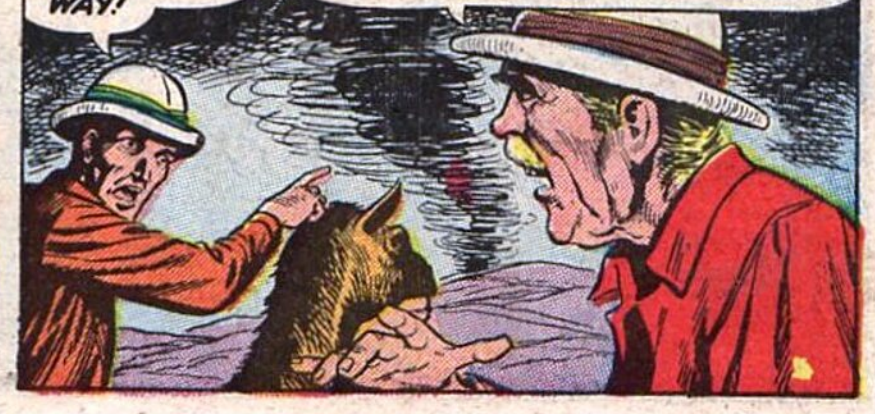
THIS IS REALLY SOMETHING, EH, PROF! TWO WHOLE MONTHS TO EXPLORE THE SAHARA! WHY, IT MAKES ME FEEL TEN YEARS YOUNGER!

DON, MY BOY, WHEN YOU'RE MY AGE, THEN YOU CAN START COUNTING THE YEARS!

BUT DON CHESTER HAS ALWAYS BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT HIS AGE. ALTHOUGH ONLY THIRTY-EIGHT, HE IS OBSESSED WITH FEARS OF "MIDDLE AGE" AND DYING, HE SECRETLY YEARNS FOR ETERNAL YOUTH. FOR THE MOMENT HE THINKS ONLY OF THE BEAUTY OF THE MYSTERIOUS SILENT DESERT... UNTIL HE SEES THE TREMENDOUS MASS OF WHIRLING BLACK AIR WHICH SWEEPS TOWARD HIM AND THE PROFESSOR...

HEY, PROF, LOOK... SANDSTORM HEADING OUR WAY!

WE'D BETTER HEAD NORTH, DON. WE DON'T WANT TO GET CAUGHT IN IT... THOSE SANDSTORMS CAN BE DEADLY!



THE TWO MEN URGE THEIR CAMELS NORTHWARD... BUT THE STORM INCREASES IN MOMENTUM AND EACH INSTANT BRINGS THE MASS OF SUFFOCATING AIR CLOSER...

HERE IT COMES, PROF! TRY AND HOLD YOUR BREATH!

PUT A HANDKERCHIEF AROUND YOUR FACE, DON! IT'LL PROTECT YOU FROM THE SAND! HURRY!

BUT THERE IS NO PROTECTION FROM THE MILLIONS OF TINY GRAINS WHICH FILL THE AIR. THE HOWLING WIND BLASTS THE SAND INTO THE TWO MEN'S EYES AND NOSES... THEY'RE BLINDED AND HELPLESS IN ITS DEADLY WAKE...

D-DON HELP ME! I-I'M FALLING... CAN'T SEE...

TAKE IT EASY, PROF, I'LL GET YOU!

BUT, ALTHOUGH DON CAN HEAR THE PROFESSOR'S VOICE SCREAMING CLOSE BY, HE CANNOT SEE HIM. HE STUMBLES AROUND DAZED AND UNABLE TO BREATH, THE SAND CLOGGING EVERY FIBER OF HIS BODY...

C-CAN'T (GAG) BREATHE, PROF, WHERE ARE YOU...I (GAG) CAN'T SEE!

OVER HERE, (COUGH) DON! OVER (CHOKE) HERE!

THE AGONIZING MINUTES PASS, BUT DON, ALTHOUGH ONLY A FEW FEET AWAY CANNOT FIND THE PROFESSOR. THE OLDER MAN'S VOICE BECOMES WEAKER AND WEAKER AND DON KNOWS HIS FRIEND IS SUFFOCATING TO DEATH...

PROF! PROF!

S-SAVE YOURSELF, (CHOKE) MY BOY. I-I CAN'T (GASP) LAST ANY LONGER!

THE PROFESSOR'S VOICE RATTLES IN HIS THROAT AND HE IS DEAD. DON KNOWS THAT HE CANNOT LAST MUCH LONGER, EITHER. HIS LUNGS SCREAM FOR AIR... BUT THERE IS NO ESCAPE FROM THE HURRICANE WIND AND BLANKET OF SAND... THE MAN WHO YEARNS FOR ETERNAL YOUTH IS ON THE THRESHOLD OF DEATH.

(GASP) GONNA DIE... I'M (CHOKE) GONNA DIE, TOO... DON'T WANT TO DIE... WANT TO LIVE... WANT (GASP) TO LIVE FOREVER!

HE CRAWLS ON HIS HANDS AND KNEES... SLOWER... SLOWER... SLOWER... UNTIL HE CAN CRAWL NO MORE. THE BLACKNESS OF TOTAL UNCONSCIOUSNESS OVERCOMES HIM AND DON'S BODY SLUMPS FORWARD, MOTIONLESS...

IT IS HOURS LATER WHEN THE WIND FINALLY DIES AND NIGHT APPROACHES. DON CHESTER LIES UNCONSCIOUS, HOVERING BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH, UNAWARE OF THE FIGURES WHICH STEAL OUT OF THE DARKNESS AND PEER DOWN AT HIM...

BUCCA DERWI KOPLA...

TICAS JUPIR WOPLAC!

DON IS GENTLY LIFTED UP AND CARRIED INTO THE NIGHT... UP... UP... UP... HIGHER AND HIGHER... BEHIND SAND DUNES... PAST AN OASIS... FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY FROM CIVILIZATION.

YOUKA HILFA BOOSA

VAZCA UTTPA IPTOS!

IT IS ON THE AFTERNOON OF THE FOLLOWING DAY WHEN DON FINALLY OPENS HIS EYES AND WEAKLY TAKES STOCK OF HIS SURROUNDINGS. FOR A MINUTE HE THINKS HE MUST BE DEAD AND IN HEAVEN... FOR WHERE ELSE BUT IN HEAVEN WOULD A MAN SEE SUCH BEAUTY...

I-I'M ALIVE! ALIVE! ---BUT AM I DREAMING?

NO, MY SON, YOU'RE NOT DREAMING!

DON WHIRLS AND FACES AN ELDERLY, WHITE-HAIRED MAN... A MAN WHO, ALTHOUGH OLD IN YEARS, HAS THE HEALTHY VIGOROUS FEATURES AND MOVEMENTS OF A MAN MUCH YOUNGER. HIS HAIR IS WHITE, BUT HIS VOICE IS FIRM AND HIS STRIDE STRONG. DON STARES AT HIM IN FASCINATION...

W-WHO ARE YOU... AND WHERE AM I?

I AM THE HIGH PRIEST OF THIS LAND... AND THE NAME OF THE LAND IS EMITON!

DON WANTS TO ASK MORE QUESTIONS BUT THE OLDER MAN QUIETS HIM, URGING HIM TO CONSERVE HIS STRENGTH. IT IS ALMOST A WEEK LATER WHEN HE IS FINALLY SHOWN AROUND THE KINGDOM OF EMITON.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU.. YOU'RE A FOREIGNER! WHY ARE YOU THE HIGH PRIEST OF THESE NATIVES? AND WHY DOES EVERYONE LOOK SO YOUNG... SO STRONG?

LIKE YOU, I TOO, WAS LOST IN A SANDSTORM AND BROUGHT HERE, THAT WAS MANY YEARS AGO. THE NATIVES MADE ME THEIR RULER WHEN THE OLD HIGH PRIEST RETIRED.

DON NOTICES THAT THE HIGH PRIEST IGNORES HIS QUESTION ABOUT THE NATIVES' YOUTH AND STRENGTH, BUT FOR THE MOMENT, HE ACCEPTS THE OLD MAN'S SILENCE. TIME PASSES, COUNTLESS DAYS IN WHICH DON REGAINS HIS HEALTH AND FEELS HIMSELF GROW MORE VIGOROUS AND POWERFUL...

BUT, SIR, I CAN'T STAY. I HAVE A JOB AND...

A JOB, MEANS NOTHING, MY BOY! I HAVE GROWN FOND OF YOU. STAY IN EMITON AND...

...I PROMISE THAT WHEN I RETIRE YOU WILL BECOME HIGH PRIEST OF THE LAND! EVERYTHING THAT IS MINE SHALL BECOME YOURS!

I-I HARDLY KNOW WHAT TO SAY...

BUT DON MAKES A QUICK DECISION. WHY LEAVE? HE FEELS GOOD, HE'S LIVING IN LUXURY AND THE FUTURE HOLDS PROMISE... MUCH PROMISE! DAYS FLY BY QUICKLY, DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, UNTIL DON HAS LOST ALL CONCEPTION OF TIME.

SIR, I'VE BEEN WONDERING. HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN HERE? WHAT MONTH IS IT? WHAT DAY, WHAT HOUR? MY WATCH HAS STOPPED AND...

DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF WITH TIME, MY SON. HERE IN EMITON, TIME MEANS NOTHING. WE ARE NOT INTERESTED IN SUCH FOOLISH MATTERS.

BUT THE YOUNG MAN CANNOT IGNORE TIME NOR THE QUESTION WHICH STILL PREYS ON HIS MIND, HAUNTING HIM, TAUNTING HIM... "WHY IS EVERYONE IN EMITON SO YOUNG?" WHY? WHY? HE PLEADS WITH THE HIGH PRIEST FOR AN ANSWER...
I KNOW THERE'S A REASON, SIR, EXCEPT FOR YOU I HAVEN'T SEEN A HUMAN BEING IN EMITON PAST THEIR TWENTIES... AND YOU HAVEN'T LIVED HERE ALL YOUR LIFE!
THERE IS A REASON, MY BOY... BUT YOU CANNOT KNOW IT UNTIL THE DAY OF MY RETIREMENT! SPEAK OF IT NO MORE.
DON NOTES THAT THE HIGH PRIEST SPEAKS NEVER OF DEATH, ONLY OF RETIREMENT. CAN IT BE THAT THERE IS NO DEATH IN EMITON? DON IS IN A FRENZY OF DELIGHT. PERHAPS HIS DREAM OF ETERNAL YOUTH HAS COME TRUE? HE TRIES TO BE PATIENT, TRIES TO HIDE HIS CURIOUSITY...AND TRIES TO PLEASE THE HIGH PRIEST...
...AND YOU WISH ME TO MARRY, SIR?
YES, MY SON, IF YOU ARE TO BECOME RULER OF EMITON YOU MUST HAVE A WIFE! I HAVE SELECTED OONA FOR YOU. SHE IS A FINE GIRL.
DON LEARNS THAT OONA HAS BEEN MARRIED BEFORE, BUT THAT HER HUSBAND WAS LOST IN A DESERT SAND STORM. SHE IS THE MOTHER OF A SMALL DAUGHTER AND AS DON TAKES HER HAND, HE DECIDES SHE WILL INDEED BE THE PERFECT QUEEN FOR HIS KINGDOM TO BE.
YOU'RE VERY LOVELY, OONA. THE DESERT TOOK ONE HUSBAND FROM YOU, BUT NOW IT HAS GIVEN YOU ANOTHER!
I AM VERY HONORED MEESTER DON!
THE PRIEST ENCOURAGES DON TO MARRY QUICKLY..AND THE WEDDING IS A LAVISH CEREMONY, CULMINATING IN A ROYAL TOAST TO DON AND HIS NEW BRIDE...
TO YOU, DON AND OONA...NEXT HIGH PRIEST AND PRIESTESS OF EMITON!
JUBBA! JUBBA!
GENKA QUINTO!
OONA, DON, AND OONA'S SMALL DAUGHTER, MOVE INTO THE HIGH PRIEST'S MANSION AND FOR A TIME DON IS CONTENT...
OKAY, HONEY..
PLAY WITH ME, DON! PLAY WITH ME!
JUST WAIT TILL I KISS YOUR MOTHER!
BUT DON IS AN IMPATIENT MAN, IMPATIENT TO BECOME RULER OF EMITON, IMPATIENT TO LEARN THE SECRET OF THE NATIVES' YOUTH. OONA REFUSES TO ANSWER HIS QUESTIONS...BUT HER SMALL DAUGHTER, YULA, IS NOT SO RETICENT...
...AND AT HIGH MOON BIG MEN OF TRIBE GO OVER HILL...BRING BACK FUNNY WATER!
YOU'RE AN ANGEL, YULA, A REAL ANGEL! DADDY LOVES YOU!
AT THE NEXT FULL MOON, DON WATCHES THE ELDERS OF THE TRIBE CAREFULLY... AND WHEN THEY LEAVE THE VILLAGE AT MIDNIGHT HE FOLLOWS THEM. THEY MOVE SLOWLY, OVER DUNES AND HIDDEN SAND CAVES, UNTIL THEY REACH A STREAM, A BRIGHT YELLOW STREAM...
BEFORE WE TAKE FROM THESE SACRED WATERS, WE MUST GIVE HOLY THANKS!
IT'S IN THE WATER! THE SECRET IS IN THE WATER!
4

AS THE HIGH PRIEST FILLS THE HUGE JUGS WITH THE YOUTH-GIVING WATER, THE ELDERS GO INTO AN EERIE DEATH DEFYING DANCE.

DEATH CANNOT CLAIM US!

WE ARE FREE FROM DEATH! THERE IS NO DEATH!

I'VE *FOUND* IT! I'LL NEVER GROW OLD! I'LL REMAIN AT THIS AGE *FOREVER!*

THE NATIVES AT LAST FINISH THEIR ANCIENT RITUAL AND LEAVE. LATER, DON SNEAKS BACK TO THE VILLAGE, GETS A JUG, AND RETURNS TO THE SACRED WATER...

WITH THIS WATER, I CAN GO BACK TO *CIVILIZATION!* WHY STAY IN *EMITON*, WHEN I COULD RULE THE *WORLD!* ME... DON CHESTER... *THE MAN WHO WON'T DIE!*

HE HIDES HIS PRECIOUS JUG OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE AND RETURNS HOME. HE HAS DECIDED TO TAKE OOONA WITH HIM. WHY NOT? SHE WILL MAKE A PERFECT EMPRESS FOR THE EMPIRE HE INTENDS TO BUILD. BUT OOONA DOES NOT FALL IN WITH HIS PLANS...

NO! NO! I CANNOT LEAVE EMITON! NOR CAN YOU WE MUST NEVER LEAVE! IT IS FORBIDDEN! I WILL GO TO *HIGH PRIEST!* YOU CANNOT

OKAY, OKAY, TAKE IT EASY, I'LL STAY! STOP SCREAMING!

OOONA BELIEVES HIM, FOR IN EMITON A LIE IS UNHEARD OF SHE KISSES HIM AND GOES TO BED, HER HEART FULL OF TRUST. DON SITS QUIETLY UNTIL SHE IS ASLEEP AND THEN HE SNEAKS INTO YULA'S ROOM AND WAKES THE CHILD..

I'LL *FIX* OOONA! SHE'LL BE *SORRY* SHE *CROSSED* ME!

SSH, HONEY, KEEP QUIET DADDY HAS A NEW GAME FOR YOU TO PLAY COME QUICKLY...

YES DADDY!

DON LEADS YULA OUT OF THE VILLAGE, STOPPING ONLY TO PICK UP THE PRICELESS JUG OF WATER! THUS, A THIEF AND A KIDNAPPER, HE LEAVES THE LAND OF EMITON. IT IS PITCH BLACK AS HE AND THE CHILD START DOWNWARD... DOWNWARD... DOWNWARD TO CIVILIZATION...

JUST KEEP HOLD OF DADDY'S HAND, YULA! BY MORNING YOU'LL BE STARTING A BRAND NEW LIFE... AND, *HA-HA-HA-HA...* SO WILL DADDY!

DOWN AND DOWN THEY GO, HOUR AFTER HOUR THROUGH THE INKY BLACKNESS UNTIL AT LAST AS THE GREY DAWN BREAKS, THEY REACH THE GIANT SAHARA.. BUT HE FORGOT TO GIVE YULA THE MIRACLE WATER, AND WHEN DON TURNS TO FACE THE CHILD..

WHAT'S THE MATTER, DADDY?

DON TURNS FROM THE HIDEOUS HAG AND RUNS WILDLY, AFRAID TO THINK, AFRAID TO BELIEVE HIS EYES. BUT IN HIS TERROR, HE DROPS THE JUG... AND THE CORK POPS OUT, SPILLING THE LIFE-GIVING LIQUID ONTO THE DESERT...

OH, NO! *NO!*

HE TRIES TO LAP UP THE YOUTH WATER WITH HIS TONGUE, BUT ALL HE GETS FOR HIS TROUBLE IS A MOUTHFUL OF SAND. DON IS TRAPPED. HE DARE NOT RETURN TO *EMITON*. HE MUST TRY TO GET BACK TO CIVILIZATION... FIRST HE WALKS, THEN HE CRAWLS, MORE DESPERATE WITH EACH AGONIZED MOVEMENT...

SO TIRED... FEEL SO WEAK... GOT TO KEEP GOING. DON'T WANT TO DIE... TOO YOUNG TO DIE...

BUT WHEN HE IS TOO EXHAUSTED TO GO FURTHER, DON IS LUCKY. THREE AMERICANS ON CAMELS FIND HIM AND TAKE HIM TO CIVILIZATION...

B-BUT IT IS SO *MODERN*... SO *NEW*! I-I DON'T UNDERSTAND!

WELL, FOR PETE'S SAKE, *OLD MAN*, WHAT DO YOU EXPECT?! *THIS IS THE YEAR 2000!* OF COURSE EVERYTHING'S UP TO DATE AND MODERN!

THE YEAR 2000! DON IS STRICKEN WITH HORROR, THE WORDS OF THE HIGH PRIEST ECHOING IN HIS EARS, "FORGET TIME"... "TIME MEANS NOTHING." HIS HAND GOES TO HIS FACE AND HE SCREAMS WITH THE SICKENING REALIZATION OF THE TRUTH...

I'M OLD... OLD! I WAS THERE *46* YEARS! *NO! NO! I WON'T BE OLD! I WON'T!*

THE TOWNSPEOPLE STARE AT THE 85-YEAR-OLD MAN WITH AMUSEMENT. "CRAZY," THEY SAY. BUT NOW DON UNDERSTANDS WHAT HAPPENED TO YULA. IN *EMITON*, SHE WAS A CHILD, BUT IN CIVILIZATION, SHE WAS A HAG...

THE WATER IS ONLY GOOD IN EMITON! I'VE *GOT* TO GET BACK! IN *EMITON* I'LL BE *YOUNG AGAIN!*

TCH, TCH, POOR *INSANE* OLD FOOL!

HE RUNS FROM PERSON TO PERSON, YELLING, "WHERE IS EMITON?" "TAKE ME BACK!" BUT NO ONE HAS EVER HEARD OF THE VILLAGE AND THEY LAUGH EVEN HARDER.

FOOLS! FOOLS! ALL OF YOU! I'LL FIND IT MYSELF! NOTHING WILL STOP ME... *NOTHING!* GOOD BY!

BUT SOMETHING DOES STOP DON... *DEATH!* HE IS AN OLD MAN AND THE TORRID SAHARA CLAIMS HIM AS A VICTIM WITHIN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS...

DYING... *(GASP)*... DYING... EMITON... GOT TO MAKE IT TO EMITON... EMITON... *(GASP)*... E... M... I... T... O...

AND BACK AT THE VILLAGE OF *EMITON*, HIDDEN AND SECRET FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD, IT IS THE TIME OF THE FULL MOON... THE TIME FOR THE DANCE WHICH LAUGHS AT DEATH!!!

THERE IS NO DEATH!

WE ARE FREE FROM DEATH!

WANT TO STAY *YOUNG*, FELLOW FIENDS? THEN COME TO *EMITON*... OR AS WE GHOSTS CALL IT, "NO TIME"! THAT'S EMITON BACKWARDS, NATCH!!!

The End!

THE CURSE

I can still see Seri, the way he appeared the first time we met.

I was working in the excavation near the great pyramid, it was late, and all the workers had gone for the day. I was using a fine sable brush on some pottery shards found that day, carefully cleaning away, grain by grain, the sands of centuries. While I bent over a fragment I had the feeling of eyes upon me. I glanced up suddenly and there he was, standing near the edge of the excavation. A typical small, dark native of the desert garbed in a loose, one-piece overgarment, his head bound round with a faded turban. He gazed at me with large and sorrowful eyes, in their depths I could see all the mystery and sadness of the east. His voice was deep, too deep for such a small man.

"Sahib should not be here, this spot is accursed."

Every other foot of this country seems to be cursed—and I told him so. He only shook his head and looked, if possible, a little more sorrowful.

"What the Sahib says is true, but some places have much bigger curse than others. Where you are is the tomb of a once mighty king who knew much of the black arts. When the king died he set a demon to guard the tomb, a water demon that will drown any who profane his last resting place."

I looked around at the barren wastes of sand and laughed out loud.

"That demon will have to carry his own water if he wants to do any drowning around here! That's the best curse I've heard yet." I went back to work on my find while Seri watched me, shaking his head unhappily from time to time.

Seri had been right about one thing, this *was* the tomb of a great king. I meant to question him more closely as to how he knew about the find, but in the excitement I never quite got around to it. The foreman must have hired him, as he did with most stragglers who came around the camp, for I saw him often after this. He was also among the bearers who carried our find to the train. During the long ride to the coast I thought of him and made a half-hearted attempt to find him in the crowded train, but this was useless. The cars were packed with natives, nine out of ten of whom looked like Seri. I gave up the hopeless search and returned to my seat. I gazed, unseeing out of the window as we rattled across the desert, and dreamed of the importance of my find.

In Cairo I lost myself in the bustle of loading the precious cargo aboard the ship, all thoughts of Seri and his mysterious curse vanished from my mind. When everything was aboard I checked out of my hotel and strode down to the ship. The dock was empty, the ship was waiting only for the ebb of the tide. Then I saw him, sitting on a bollard, waiting for me.

"Seri, I've been wanting to talk to you, come aboard the ship with me for a few moments."

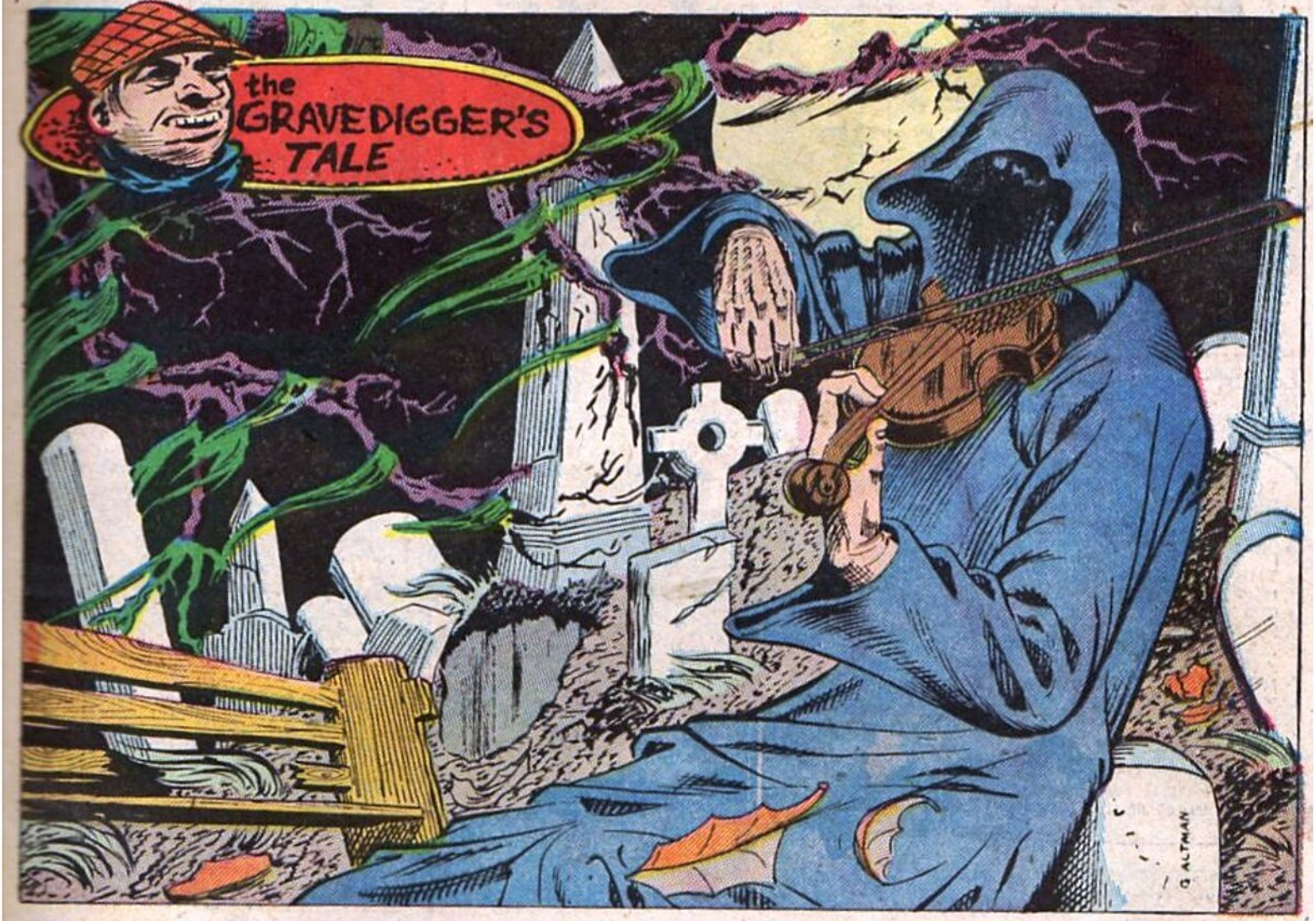
"Of course, Sahib, shall we use this gangplank?" He pointed to one of the smaller gangplanks. I stepped past him, stepped onto the gangplank—and found myself falling through the air. I turned as I fell and saw that the dock was empty, no one was there. There was also no gangplank where I had walked.

Now, as the oily harbor waters close over my head, I know that Seri spoke the truth.

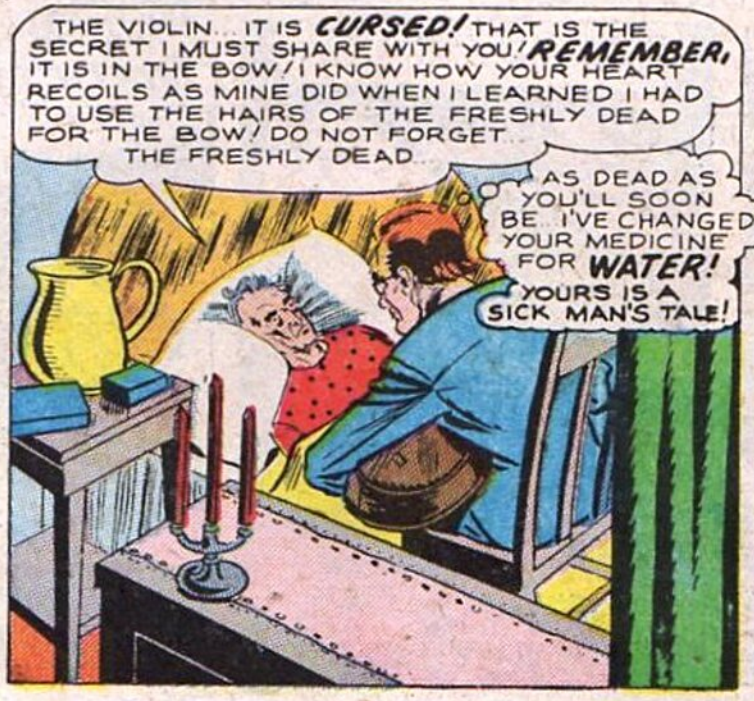
He is the water demon.

WELL, HERE WE ARE, BACK AGAIN FOR ANOTHER *SHIVAREE* OF *SHENANIGANS* AND *QUIVERS!* FOR THIS IS A DOLEFUL DIRGE FOR LONG HAIRS! IT'S THE STORY OF A CONCERT FIDDLER WHO WAS REAL GONE FOR THAT FINE TONE, AND NOBODY DUG HIM TILL HE WENT OUT AND DUG FOR HIMSELF. THIS IS REAL CRAZY, CATS, CRAZY AS MORTY JENKS, AND THIS IS HIS STORY, THE STORY OF HOW

FATE PLAYS THE VIOLIN



THE GREAT UMBERTO ROMANI WAS DYING! MORTON JENKS, HIS FAVORITE PUPIL SAT BESIDE THE BED HUGGING THE STRADIVARIUS TO HIMSELF, AND SHIVERING! NO, IT WAS NOT FROM COLD THAT MORTY SHIVERED, BUT RATHER FROM THE TALE ROMANI HAD BEEN TELLING HIM, THE TALE OF HOW HE ACHIEVED THAT WONDROUS TONE WHILE HE PLAYED THE VIOLIN NO WONDER MORTY FELT THE ICY FINGERS OF THE UNKNOWN RIDE HIS SPINE!


THE VIOLIN... IT IS *CURSED!* THAT IS THE SECRET I MUST SHARE WITH YOU! *REMEMBER,* IT IS IN THE BOW! I KNOW HOW YOUR HEART RECOILS AS MINE DID WHEN I LEARNED I HAD TO USE THE HAIRS OF THE FRESHLY DEAD FOR THE BOW! DO NOT FORGET... THE FRESHLY DEAD...
AS DEAD AS YOU'LL SOON BE... I'VE CHANGED YOUR MEDICINE FOR *WATER!* YOURS IS A SICK MAN'S TALE!

AND SO THE MAESTRO DIED...

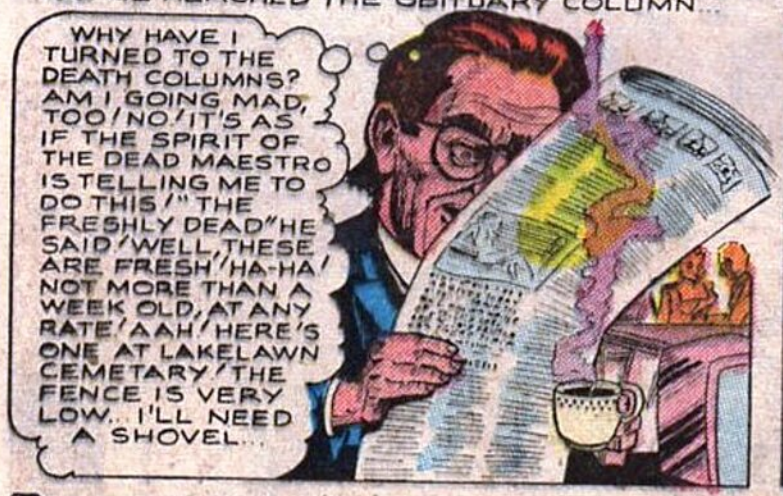
AT FIRST MORTY JENKS REFUSED TO BELIEVE THE OLD MAESTRO'S DYING STORY, BUT THE BEAUTIFUL TONES OF THE STRADIVARIUS BEGAN TO SOUND MORE AND MORE LIKE THE HOWLS OF A DYING CAT...

JENKS STRODE ON THE STAGE THAT NIGHT AND FACED THE AUDIENCE BRAVELY! BUT FROM THE OPENING NOTES OF HIS FIRST PIECE IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG!

THE CONCERT DID NOT LAST LONG THE AUDIENCE BOOED HIM, BOOED AND HISSED HIM OFF THE STAGE NOW HE SAT ALONE...

I DIDN'T BELIEVE ROMANI! HIS STORY SOUNDED LIKE THE RAVING OF A MANIAC! BUT IT MUST BE TRUE! IN THE WEEKS SINCE HIS DEATH I HAVE HEARD HOW THE SOUND OF THE INSTRUMENT HAS CHANGED! BUT WHAT CAN I DO?

LATER THAT NIGHT, IN THE HOTEL COFFEE SHOP JENKS OPENED A NEWSPAPER! IN SPITE OF HIMSELF HE FOUND HIS FINGERS TURNING THE PAGES 'TILL HE REACHED THE OBITUARY COLUMN...


WHY HAVE I TURNED TO THE DEATH COLUMNS? AM I GOING MAD, TOO! NO! IT'S AS IF THE SPIRIT OF THE DEAD MAESTRO IS TELLING ME TO DO THIS!" THE FRESHLY DEAD" HE SAID! WELL, THESE ARE FRESH! HA-HA! NOT MORE THAN A WEEK OLD, AT ANY RATE! AAH! HERE'S ONE AT LAKELAWN CEMETARY! THE FENCE IS VERY LOW.. I'LL NEED A SHOVEL...

THE VERY NEXT NIGHT JENKS WENT TO LAKELAWN CEMETERY! A CHILL WIND SIGHED THROUGH THE TREES, WHISTLED ABOUT THE WHITE TOMBSTONES AND RUSTLED THE DEAD LEAVES! JENKS FORCED HIMSELF TO IGNORE THESE SOUNDS! HE WORKED FEVERISHLY...

THE DIGGING SEEMED ENDLESS! HIS BODY SHAKING WITH FATIGUE HE CONTINUED UNTIL HE HIT THE METAL LID OF THE COFFIN...

LATER THAT NIGHT IT WAS A HARD TASK FITTING THE PRETTY HAIR TO THE BOW, BUT AT LAST IT WAS DONE

HE DREW THE BOW ACROSS THE VIOLIN.. THE SOUND IT MADE WAS LIKE THE MELLOW BARITONE OF AN ORGAN, A TRIUMPHAL SOUND THAT FILLED HIM WITH A SWELLING TIDE OF JOY...

A WEEK LATER JENKS HAD ANOTHER BOOKING IN A SMALL CITY! HE PLAYED THE CONCERT WITH THE SURETY AND FINESSE OF A MASTER! HIS FINGERS CARESSED THE WOOD AND SOUL-STIRRING MUSIC POURED OUT... THE STRADIVARIOUS HAD NEVER SOUNDED RICHER, NOT EVEN WHEN ROMANI HAD PLAYED IT!

AFTER THE CONCERT JENKS AGENT CAME TO HIM WITH EXCITING NEWS.

MAN, YOU WERE GREAT TONIGHT! WHY AFTER THIS WE'LL BOOK YOU IN EVERY HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY! BUT FIRST WE'LL PLAY THE STICKS A LITTLE MORE! I ALREADY GOT YOU BOOKED FOR THE NEXT FOUR WEEKS!
YES, I WAS VERY GOOD, WASN'T I?
...AND I'LL BE BETTER, NOW THAT I BELIEVE THE SECRET...

BUT JENKS SOON FOUND OUT THE BOW WAS A HARD TASKMASTER! THE HAIR DID NOT LAST LONG, AND THE MOMENT IT BEGAN TO AGE THE VIOLIN LOST IT'S TONE. WORSE, IT WAS NOT EASY TO GET HAIR FROM THE NEWLYDEAD! HE WOULD RUSH FROM THE CONCERT HALL WHEN HE HEARD THE FIRST HARSH NOTE.. CHOKING BACK HIS HORROR OF HIS LOATHSOME TASK HE WOULD SEEK OUT A CEMETERY! THE ONE LIVING MAN AMONGST THE COUNTLESS DEAD, HE WOULD VIOLATE THEIR PEACE TO MAKE HIS FORTUNE...

THEN, ONE RAIN-FILLED NIGHT, JENKS BECAME CARELESS AND A CARETAKER HEARD THE SOUND OF HIS FIENDISH WORK AND ALMOST CAUGHT HIM!

NEXT DAY...

...LAST NIGHT, COWPER HERN, A CARETAKER AT PEACEFUL HAVEN CEMETERY ALMOST CAUGHT A GRAVEDIGGING GHOUL WHO HAD UNEARTHED THE COFFIN OF THE LATE GERTRUDE ANDERSON! THE GHOUL LEFT A PAIR OF SCISSORS! POLICE ARE TRYING TO IDENTIFY THE OWNER!

GHOUL ROBS CEMETERY

FOR MONTHS JENKS DID NOT TOUCH HIS VIOLIN! HE LOOKED AT IT... HATED IT... WHILE THE LIGHT OF MADNESS GREW IN HIS EYES! THEN AT LAST HE PICKED IT UP AND PLAYED... A HORRIBLE SOUND...

IT'S BECOMING WORSE... AND I ONLY JUST FITTED THE HAIR TO THE BOW! WHAT CAN I DO? I NEED NEW HAIR!

AND THEN, FATE STEPPED IN... MORTY WAS THE ONLY WITNESS TO A HIT AND RUN ACCIDENT! HE STEPPED UP TO THE DEAD VICTIM..

THANKS, MY FRIEND! YOU SHOULD BE PROUD THAT THE GREAT MORTIMER JENKS HAS TAKEN YOUR HAIR...

JENKS COULD FEEL THE REACTION OF HIS AUDIENCE THE NEXT NIGHT, BUT WAS STILL UNSATISFIED / EVEN THOUGH THE APPLAUSE SEEMED LOUD... IT WAS THE TONE, AGAIN!

THE TONE WAS TOO ROBUST! THE VIOLIN'S TONE RESEMBLES THE ONE WHOSE HAIR I USE! I MUST FIND SOMEONE YOUNGER... A GIRL I THINK WOULD BE BETTER! A GIRL'S HAIR!

ONCE MORE THE HAIR AGED AND THE VIOLIN'S TONE CHANGED! JENKS WANTED A GIRLS HAIR, BUT SAW NO WAY TO GET IT! THEN ONE NIGHT ON THE STREET...

SO YOUNG AND PRETTY! IF I HAD HER HAIR WHAT BEAUTIFUL MUSIC I COULD PLAY... THE SWEET SOPRANO NOTES!

MEAN TO SAY YOU'LL GIVE ME TEN BUCKS JUST TO LISTEN TO YOU PLAY THAT FIDDLE?

YES, MY DEAR! TEN DOLLARS! I HAVE COMPOSED A BEAUTIFUL CONCERTO AND I WANT YOU TO HEAR IT! SEE, HERE IS THE MONEY...

HE BROUGHT HER TO HIS STUDIO... PLAYED FOR HER...

THEN HE EXPLAINED HIS NEED FOR HAIR OF THE NEWLY DEAD... IT FRIGHTENED HER!

THE MUSIC ENDED WITH THE SOUND OF HER VOICE... AND MADNESS FILLED THE ROOM... SHE SCREAMED AND DIED OF HEART-FAILURE- THE TERROR WAS TOO MUCH!

NEVER HAD THE STRADIVARIOUS PLAYED WITH SUCH SWEET TONES AS NOW! HER RICH LONG HAIR WAS JUST WHAT THE VIOLIN NEEDED!

AH! EXACTLY THE TONE I WANTED! I MUST GET RID OF HER BODY, THEN GET BOOKED INTO A CONCERT HALL! HOW CAN THEY HELP BUT THINK ME THE GREATEST VIOLINIST IN THE WORLD, NOW!

A WEEK LATER THE HAIR WAS OLD... THE AUDIENCE LAUGHED AT HIM...

AS JENKS WALKED THE STREETS LATE THAT NIGHT SIGHING IN DESPAIR OVER THE END OF HIS CAREER, A CIRCUS POSTER CAUGHT HIS EYE AND INSPIRED A NEW THOUGHT...

THIS MORNING'S PAPER CARRIED A STORY OF THE DEATH OF THE FEATURED SINGER WITH THE CIRCUS... HMMM... IF I COULD GET A SINGER'S HAIR, WHAT TONE MY VIOLIN WOULD HAVE THEN! BUT I CAN'T GET NEAR HER BODY... I MUST BRIBE SOMEONE FROM THE CIRCUS!
DINGLING'S
CIRCUS
WOW

JENKS MANAGED TO BRIBE A CIRCUS ROUSTABOUT, AND THAT NIGHT, LONG AFTER THE LAST PERFORMANCE...

HE RAISES THE SCISSORS, BUT...

I CAN'T DO IT! SHE'S SO BEAUTIFUL! I ALWAYS LOVED HER WHEN SHE WAS ALIVE... I NEVER DARED TO TELL HER! NOW THAT SHE'S DEAD I CAN'T MAR HER BEAUTY! I KNOW WHAT I CAN DO!

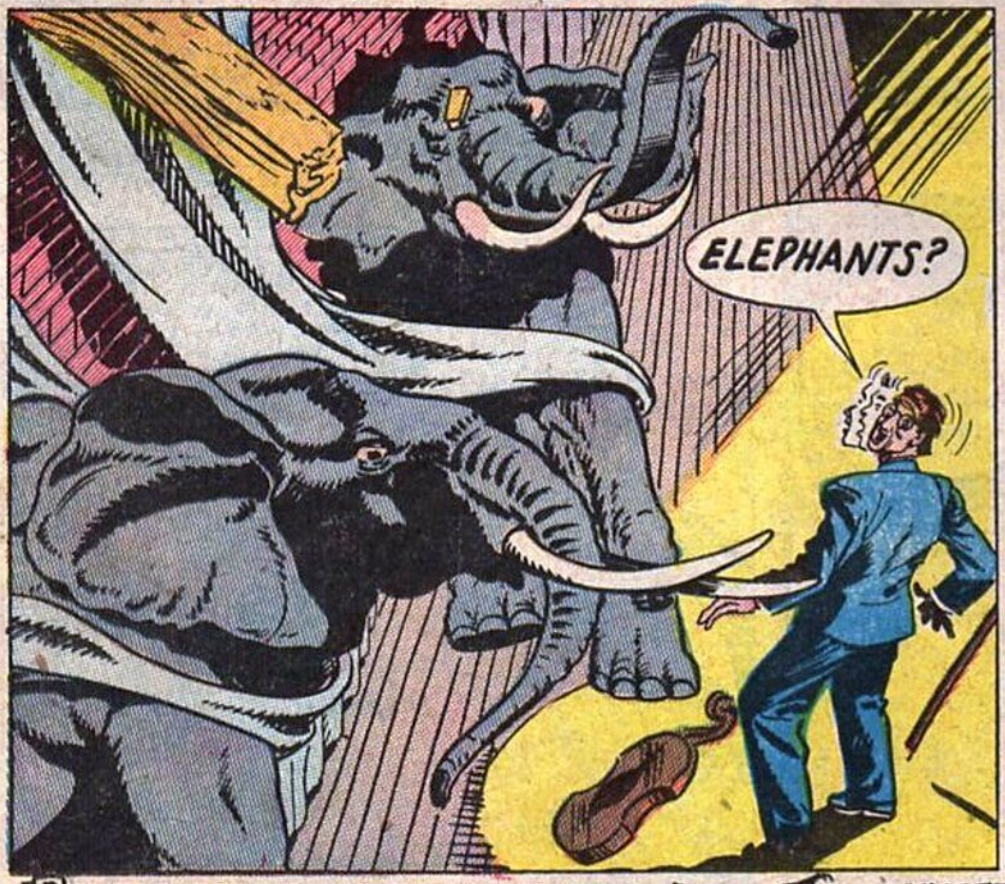
HE RETURNS QUICKLY TO THE ANIMAL TENT...

THIS BULL ELEPHANT JUST DIED TODAY! MOST PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE THAT AN ELEPHANT HAS LONG, FINE HAIR IN HIS THICK HIDE! I'LL SELL THIS HAIR TO THAT SCREWBALL FOR A THOUSAND BUCKS!

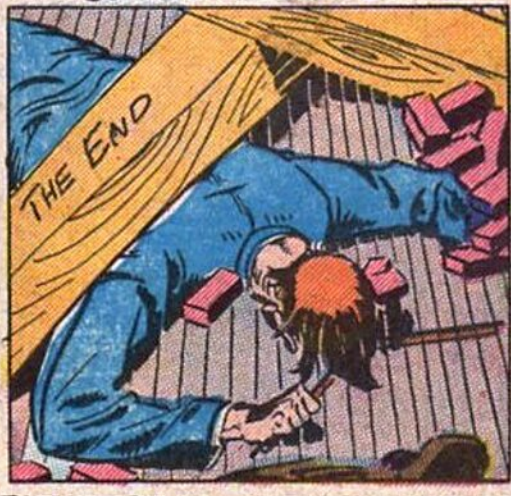
SHORTLY AFTERWARD THE ROUSTABOUT ARRIVED WITH THE PROMISED HAIR! JENKS TOUCHED IT... CARESSED IT...

JENKS MANAGED TO OBTAIN ANOTHER ENGAGEMENT... NOR DID HE BOTHER TO PRACTICE! HE WAS SURE OF HIMSELF, THIS TIME! HE DID NOT KNOW THAT HIS BOW CONTAINED ELEPHANT HAIR FROM THE BELOVED LEADER OF THE CIRCUS HERD... THE VIOLIN PLAYED WITH THE CRY OF THE BULL ELEPHANT...

THE CALL OF THEIR LEADER... THE ELEPHANTS HEARD IT...



THE CIRCUS PARADE WAS PASSING IN THE STREET! THE ELEPHANTS DRIVEN MAD BY THE SOUND OF THEIR DEAD LEADER TRAMPLED THEIR TORMENTER, GIVING HIM THE DEATH HE HAD SO LONG DESERVED...



DON'T FORGET TO WRITE AND TELL US WHICH STORIES YOU LIKED THE BEST---

MYSTERIOUS TALES - PREMIER MAGAZINES
11 EAST 44TH ST. · NEW YORK, 17. N.Y.

FOND FELICITATIONS, FOLLOWERS OF THE STRANGE AND THE SUPERNATURAL! READY FOR ANOTHER SOJOURN IN THE WORLD OF THE WIERD? TEE HEE, THEN GET SET TO FLY BACKWARD INTO TIME! BACK TO THE ERA OF WITCH-BURNINGS AND TERRIFYING SPELLS, BACK TO THE DAYS OF SUPERSTITIONS AND FANTASY! LISTEN CAREFULLY AS WE BRING YOU THE SOUND OF...

EVIL VOICES!

THE GRAVEYARD KEEPERS TALE

THE WOMEN OF THIS TOWN ARE DRIVING ME MAD.. THEY WHISPER ALL THE TIME THAT MY WIFE IS A WITCH! THE FOOLS..! SHE'S NOT! SHE'S NOT!
AL HOLLINGSWORTH

THE YEAR, 1808. THE TIME, MIDNIGHT. THE PLACE, THE OUTSKIRTS OF MASSACHUSETTS. THE RAIN CAME DOWN IN GREAT GUSTS AND THE WIND HOWLED IN THE DISMAL NIGHT AS TODD LOWELL ATTEMPTED TO FORCE HIS EXAUSTED STALLION FORWARD, DOWN THE THICK MUDDY ROAD...

THE YOUNG MAN BREATHED A LONG SIGH OF RELIEF AS HE SAW THE DIM LIGHTS OF AN INN IN THE DISTANCE. HE WAS SOPPING WET, AND HIS ONLY THOUGHT WAS OF A WARM MEAL AND A SOFT BED...

TODD GAVE HIS HORSE TO AN ELDERLY STABLEMAN AND HURRIED INSIDE. AS HE SHOOK THE RAIN FROM HIS SHOULDERS HE DECIDED TO HAVE A TANKARD OF ALE BEFORE SUPPER...

LOOK AT THAT GIRL! SHE'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING I'VE EVER SEEN! I... I'VE GOT TO TALK TO HER!

THE YOUNG MAN SEATED HIMSELF AT A TABLE, ORDERING ONE ALE AFTER ANOTHER, UNTIL HE SCREWED UP HIS COURAGE ENOUGH TO SPEAK TO HER. SHE RETURNED HIS SHY WORDS WITH A DAZZLING SMILE.. AND TODD LOWELL LOST HIS HEART ...

I..ER..I KNOW I'M BEING FORWARD, MISS, BUT PLEASE, WHEN YOU'VE FINISHED YOUR WORK, WOULD YOU SIT WITH ME FOR A WHILE?

I'D BE HONORED, SIR.

AND SO IT PASSED THAT CATHERINE DUNCAN, A BARMAID, AND TODD LOWELL, SON OF A WEALTHY NEW ENGLAND LAND OWNER, MET ONE RAINY NIGHT. BY THE END OF THE EVENING, TODD HAD ASKED THE GIRL TO MARRY HIM ...

I KNOW I MAY BE RUSHING YOU, MISS CATHERINE, B-BUT I LOVE YOU. WILL YOU BE MY WIFE?

IN THIS ONE BRIEF NIGHT, YOU HAVE STOLEN MY LOVE. I WILL BE YOUR WIFE, TODD LOWELL!

CATHERINE'S FATHER WAS THE OWNER OF THE INN AND ON THE FOLLOWING MORNING, TODD ASKED THE COARSE BEARDED MAN FOR HIS DAUGHTER'S HAND ...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY, MISTER LOWELL. OF COURSE, I'VE HEARD OF YOUR FATHER ... BUT CATHERINE IS VERY YOUNG. SHE HAS HARDLY EVER BEEN OUT OF MY SIGHT.

I WOULD TAKE VERY GOOD CARE OF HER, SIR. THE BEST!

NATHANIEL DUNCAN STARED DOWN AT HIS ONLY CHILD, EXAMINING HER SWEET INNOCENT FACE INTENTLY. THEN HE SPOKE ...

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT IT, CATHERINE? WILL YOU BE A GOOD WIFE? WILL YOU NOT DO ANYTHING TO BRING DISGRACE TO YOUR NAME?

OH, FATHER, I PROMISE.. I PROMISE. I LOVE HIM. I SWEAR, I WILL BE A GOOD WIFE!

BUT STILL THE INNKEEPER SEEMED HESITANT AND TODD FELT HIMSELF GROWING IRRITATED. AFTER ALL, DIDN'T HIS FATHER OWN HALF THE LAND IN THE STATE? WHO COULD MAKE CATHERINE A BETTER OFFER? BUT FINALLY, WITH OBVIOUS RELUCTANCE, THE FATHER AGREED ...

I GIVE YOU MY BLESSINGS ... AND I PRAY THAT YOU WILL GUARD CATHERINE FROM ALL EVIL, MY SON!

HAVE NO FEARS, SIR.

BUT TODD LOWELL COULD NOT SEE INTO THE FUTURE. HE COULD NOT KNOW THAT WHEN HE BROUGHT HIS BRIDE HOME TO SALEM, THE TOWNS' WOMEN WOULD BE ENRAGED BY HIS CHOICE ...

SHE'S A COMMON LITTLE BARMAID! HE MET HER WHILE HE WAS AWAY ON BUSINESS FOR HIS FATHER!

HUMPH! SHE MARRIED HIM FOR HIS MONEY!

SHE MUST HAVE BEWITCHED HIM! OBVIOUSLY, MY DEAR DAUGHTER GERTRUDE WOULD HAVE MADE HIM A FAR BETTER WIFE!

I WILL NOT GO TO THE HOUSE-WARMING PARTY MOTHER! IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN MY HOUSE ... MY PARTY! I WON'T LET THAT LITTLE SNIP LAUGH AT ME!
DON'T BE A FOOL, GERTRUDE. NOW, YOU LISTEN TO ME...

ILL
INTO
MAKE
OESN'T!
TO THAT
RUDE...
TE HER
RT STORIES
WITCH!

ALL SALEM SOCIETY WAS AT THE LOWELL HOUSE-WARMING. TODD ENTERTAINED HIS FELLOW TOWNSPEOPLE ROYALLY, BUT BY THE MIDDLE OF THE EVENING, HE KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG...
I..I'M SORRY YOU CAN'T COME TO THE LUNCHEON I'M HAVING NEXT WEEK, LADIES. I..I'D HOPED I COULD GET TO KNOW YOU BETTER!
I'M SORRY, MY DEAR, BUT I HAVE TO BE VERY CAREFUL TO SEE THAT GERTRUDE ISN'T EXPOSED TO ANY BAD COMPANY!

TODD COULDN'T BELIEVE HIS EARS BY THE END OF THE EVENING, EVERY WOMAN IN THE ROOM HAD SLYLY INSULTED HIS CATHERINE, AND AFTER THE PARTY ENDED, SHE BURST INTO TEARS...
OH, TODD, (SOB) THEY HATE ME! I NEVER SHOULD HAVE MARRIED YOU.
NOW, NOW, SWEETHEART, DON'T CRY. I..I GUESS IT WILL JUST TAKE TIME.

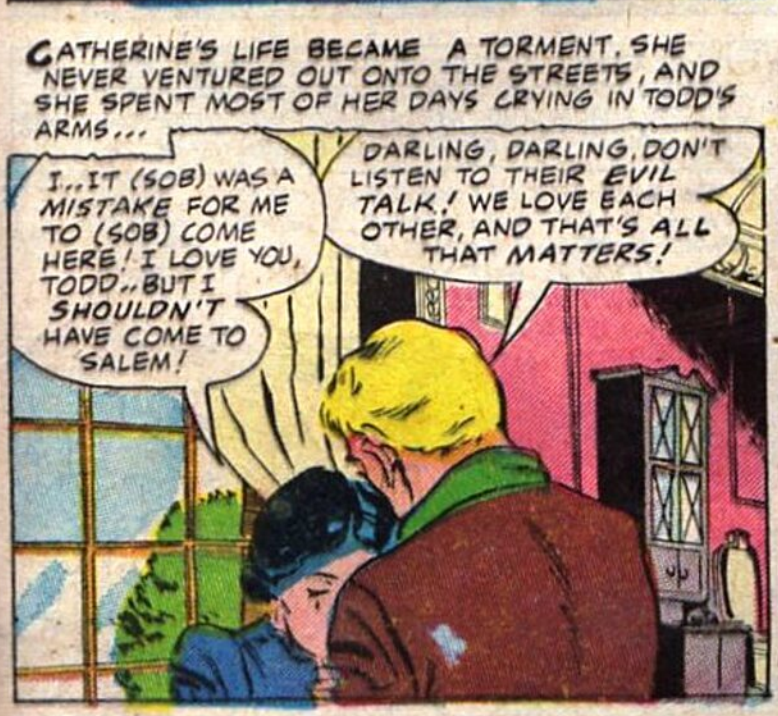
T HELP. THE WOMEN OF SALEM, BY AGNES AND GERTRUDE DUNN, IN THEIR POWER TO MAKE INE MISERABLE...
WHISPERING AIN. A-AND VERY WOMAN T ME, WAS THE CHURCH IAL!
IGNORE THEM, MY DARLING! THEY'RE NOT WORTH YOUR UNHAPPINESS!
FRUIT
1C

IT WAS TWO DAYS LATER WHEN MRS. FLOYD HOWARD, THE LEADER OF THE CHURCH, WAS FOUND DEAD IN HER SLEEP. THE TOWN DOCTOR SAID IT WAS A HEART ATTACK, BUT...
HUMPH! HEART ATTACK INDEED! IT WAS THAT SNIP OF A CATHERINE! SHE'S A TROUBLE-MAKER... AND SHE WAS FURIOUS BECAUSE DEAR MRS. HOWARD HAD THE GOOD TASTE NOT TO INVITE HER TO OUR SOCIAL!

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, MRS. DUNN... THAT CATHERINE LOWELL CAST A SPELL ON MY POOR WIFE?
FAR BE IT FROM US TO START RUMORS, MR. HOWARD, BUT, MARK MY WORDS NO GOOD WILL COME TO SALEM AS LONG AS THAT GIRL'S HERE! THERE'LL BE MORE TROUBLE.. YES, I THINK SHE'S A WITCH!
BY NIGHTFALL, THE RUMORS WERE STARTED FLYING ALL OVER TOWN...
SOME OF THE WOMAN FOLK THINK TODD LOWELL'S WIFE CAN CAST EVIL SPELLS!
SHE'S A SWEET LOOKING LITTLE THING... BUT YOU NEVER CAN TELL! WITCHES CAN BE PRETTY OR UGLY, I SAY!
AND GERTRUDE AND AGNES MADE SURE THAT THE RUMORS CONTINUED...
I TELL YOU, WE MUST BE ON OUR GUARD! SHE IS AN EVIL GIRL!
SHE HATES ALL OF US WHO HAVE REFUSED TO LET A CHEAP LITTLE BARMAID INTO OUR SOCIETY! BEWARE, LADIES.
BUT PERHAPS THE TALK WOULD HAVE DIED DOWN IF GERTRUDE'S MOTHER HADN'T BEEN STRUCK BY A RUNAWAY HORSE ONE MORNING IN THE MARKETPLACE...
MOTHER, LOOK OUT!
WH.. AIEEE!
OH, NO..
GOOD HEAVENS..
AND AS AGNES DUNN LAY DYING ON THE COBBLESTONE STREET, SHE POINTED TO WHERE CATHERINE STOOD, MINGLED IN WITH THE CROWD...
MOTHER, MOTHER...
SHE DID IT.. SHE CAST A SPELL ON THE HORSE.. SHE... KILLED.. ME!
SHE'S A WITCH!
AND AS AGNES GASPED HER LAST BREATH THE FARMER WHO OWNED THE HORSE, ALSO TURNED ON LITTLE CATHERINE...
MY HORSE WAS FIFTEEN YEARS OLD! HE WAS ALWAYS GENTLE AND PEACEFUL! HE NEVER CAUSED ME NO TROUBLE... TILL YOU CAME TO TOWN!
THAT'S RIGHT!
THAT OLD HORSE USED TO BE AS MEEK AS A LAMB!
YOU DID IT! YOU KILLED MY MOTHER! YOU HATED HER... AND NOW YOU'VE CAUSED HER TO DIE! YOU'RE A WITCH! A WITCH!
SHE WAS STANDING BY THE HORSE RIGHT BEFORE HE RAN AWAY!
THAT'S WHEN SHE CAST THE SPELL!
4

CATHERINE WAS TERRIFIED AND SHE TURNED AND RAN FROM THE ANGRY CROWD ...
NO! NO! I DID NOTHING.. NOTHING!
WITCH! WITCH!

THE NEWS OF AGNES DUNN'S DEATH SPREAD OVER SALEM LIKE WILDFIRE ...AND SO DID THE INCREASINGLY VICIOUS RUMORS ABOUT YOUNG CATHERINE LOWELL ...
SHE PUT A CURSE ON THE HORSE!
SHE CAN CONJURE UP EVIL SPIRTS!
SHE PRETENDS TO BE SWEET AND INNOCENT... BUT SHE GIVES ME THE CREEPS!


CATHERINE'S LIFE BECAME A TORMENT. SHE NEVER VENTURED OUT ONTO THE STREETS, AND SHE SPENT MOST OF HER DAYS CRYING IN TODD'S ARMS ...
I.. IT (SOB) WAS A MISTAKE FOR ME TO (SOB) COME HERE! I LOVE YOU, TODD.. BUT I SHOULDN'T HAVE COME TO SALEM!
DARLING, DARLING, DON'T LISTEN TO THEIR EVIL TALK! WE LOVE EACH OTHER, AND THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS!

BUT EVEN CATHERINE'S WITHDRAWEL FROM THE SALEM STREETS DIDN'T SATISFY THE RUMOR MONGERS. WHENEVER ANYTHING IN THE TOWN WENT WRONG, GERT BLAMED IT ON HER ...
WE AIN'T HAD NO RAIN IN MONTHS! IT'S THAT GIRL I TELL YOU! SHE DID IT! SHE WANTS OUR CROPS TO BE RUINED!
YOU'RE RIGHT, LUCAS. SHE IN THAT HOUSE ALL DAY LONG CONJURING UP EVIL DEEDS! LIKE GERT SAYS!

THE FINAL STRAW CAME WHEN THE WIFE OF THE MAYOR OF SALEM SUFFERED A STROKE WHEN PASSING IN FRONT OF THE LOWELL HOUSE...
AYYYY!

THE TOWNSPEOPLE RUSHED TO HER SIDE, BUT IT WAS TOO LATE. SHE WAS DEAD. THEY TURNED AND STARED AT TODD'S HOUSE, AND THEIR MUTTERINGS ROSE TO SHOUTS OF RAGE ...
CATHERINE WAS STANDING AT THAT WINDOW WHEN MRS. RENNER FELL OVER! SHE CAUSED THE POOR SOUL TO DIE!
HOW LONG ARE WE GOING TO PUT UP WITH THIS! SHE'S GOING TO KILL US ALL!

BY NIGHTFALL, EVERY CITIZEN OF SALEM WAS HYSTERICAL WITH FEAR AND RAGE. THEY GATHERED TOGETHER AND STARTED TOWARD THE LOWELL HOUSE ...
GET THE WITCH! GET THE WITCH!
WE MUST PROTECT OURSELVES!
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO STOP A WITCH!

THE CROWD BURST INTO THE FRONT DOOR AND SHOVED TODD ASIDE WHEN HE TRIED TO PROTECT HIS WIFE...

STOP IT! LET ME GO! YOU'VE LOST YOUR MINDS!

NO, YOU LOST YOUR MIND WHEN YOU MARRIED HER, TODD! SHE'S BEWITCHED YOU.. BUT WE'RE GOING TO SAVE YOU FROM HER!

SCREAMING OUT THEIR RAGE AND VENGENCE, THE MOB DRAGGED CATHERINE OUT ONTO THE STREET AND TOWARD THE TOWN SQUARE...

KILL THE WITCH! BURN HER AT THE STAKE! BURN HER AT THE STAKE!

PLEASE, NO.. NO... STOP, STOP!

YOU CAN'T DO THIS! YOU'RE MADMEN.. CATHERINE, CATHERINE!

TODD WATCHED WITH HORRIFIED DISBELIEF AS HIS BEAUTIFUL, SWEET WIFE WAS TIED TO A STAKE AND HAY PILED AROUND HER FEET...

THE WOMEN DID IT! THEY'RE TO BLAME... I WANTED TO BE FRIENDS, BUT THEY WERE JEALOUS OF ME!

HA! WHO WANTS A WITCH FOR A FRIEND? WE WEREN'T JEALOUS... WE WERE AFRAID! KILL HER! KILL HER!

TODD STARTED TO SOB BROKENLY AS GERTRUDE DUNN LEANED TOWARD CATHERINE, A FLAMING TORCH IN HER HAND, READY TO IGNITE THE HAY...

CATHERINE!

IT'S YOUR FAULT, GERTRUDE! YOU AND YOUR MOTHER STARTED THE WHOLE THING!

HA, HA... YOU'RE RIGHT, YOU LITTLE GUTTERSNIPE! AND WITH YOU BURNED AS A WITCH, TODD WILL BE MINE AGAIN!

BUT SUDDENLY, CATHERINE BROKE LOOSE FROM HER BONDS AND STOOD BEFORE THE CROWD. HER EYES WERE BLAZING AND THE SWEET INNOCENCE DROPPED FROM HER FACE... AS THE PILE BEGAN TO BURN...

YOU WOULDN'T LET ME BE GOOD! WHEN I LEFT MY FATHER, I VOWED THAT I WOULD LEAVE ALL EVIL BEHIND.. BUT YOU WOMEN WOULDN'T LET ME! NOW YOU WILL PAY!

TODD WATCHED HIS WIFE AND SUDDENLY HE REMEMBERED THE EERIE INN WHERE HE'D FOUND HER... REMEMBERED HER FATHER'S STERN FACE AND HIS RELUCTANCE TO LET HER GO. IT WAS TRUE... CATHERINE WAS A WITCH!

NOW YOU'LL PAY.. I REALLY AM A WITCH! JABBA SICA LIRRA! JABBA SIC LIRRA!

WITHIN AN INSTANT, THE QUAKING GERTRUDE HAD BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A STONE STATUE. THE MEN WATCHED, TRANSFIXED WITH HORROR AS CATHERINE, CACKLING WITH GLEE WENT OFF INTO THE NIGHT...

HEE! HEE! HEE! HEE, HEE!

AND NOW THE STONE STATUE STANDS FOREVER IN THE VILLAGE SQUARE...

THE END

ETERNAL LIFE

The lost land was a legend all up and down the diamond coast. Brian Andrews had been hearing it for years—the story of the land that time forgot and its beautiful queen who lived forever. He had long since dismissed it as a wishful flight of fancy when he met his old Professor Klepner from Vienna. Herr Klepner had been Professor of Antiquities at Rommstess University, a small college that had a fabulous collection of mediaeval manuscripts. Buried in the musty files he had found a map, the map that he had carried thousands of miles to show to his former student, Brian Andrews. The professor's enthusiasm fired the younger man, together they planned an expedition to the interior. Brian dreamed of the fame and riches that would be his, but Professor Klepner, now in his seventieth year, could think only of Queen Aleena—and eternal life.

Through the steaming rain forest their safari pushed, up into the higher plain country, moving steadily towards the mountain barrier. They were in unknown country now, the land was taboo to all the tribes. Their bearers were becoming restless, each morning there were always a few less in the line. When the foothills were reached the first few cool mountain breezes drove the natives into a frenzy of terror. They ignored all pleas and offers, during the night they vanished, back towards the lowlands, Brian and the professor were alone. They took what equipment they could carry easily and followed the ancient map into the trackless mountains.

There was always water to drink, the eternal snows provided that, but their carefully hoarded food gave out. Sunblind and starving they pushed on, they must find their goal now—or die! They never knew when they first entered the hidden land. They first realized that they had reached their objective when the air grew warmer. As the sunblindness ebbed away they saw a peaceful, green valley reaching before them. They had made it.

Refreshed after eating some of the strange fruit that grew in the valley tree they looked around them. Not a soul was to be seen—but at the distant end of the valley they saw a grim and ancient castle. They approached it cautiously and entered through a rift in one ruined wall. Amazement rooted them in their tracks when they looked in.

Men in ancient armor stood about, armor that had been old when civilization was young. A crumbling staircase led down into the courtyard, and on the steps was Aleena. Hers was an eerie beauty that took the breath away, an incredible mixture of youthful loveliness intermingled with a feeling of incredible age. The dwarf with her saw the two men at the opening in the wall and pointed to them excitedly. Aleena turned her eyes towards them and beckoned them forwards. Looking a little uneasily at the halberds and pikes carried by the guards, Brian and the professor came towards her.

"Do not be afraid," she said, and her voice was golden melody, "No one will harm you. We are all strangers here like yourself, seekers after the secret of this land. Gog here is the oldest of us all, he comes from a different race of men. Cro-magnon I believe your wise men call them. We all came here for the secret of eternal life—and found it. But we found out the price too. To leave is to die, we —and you now, are doomed to stay here forever."

The professor accepted the idea readily, for he was an old man and would have had only a few more years of life in the outside world. At first Brian fought against it, rejected it. What could this valley offer! A chance to study the history of the world by talking to those that had lived it—but what else?

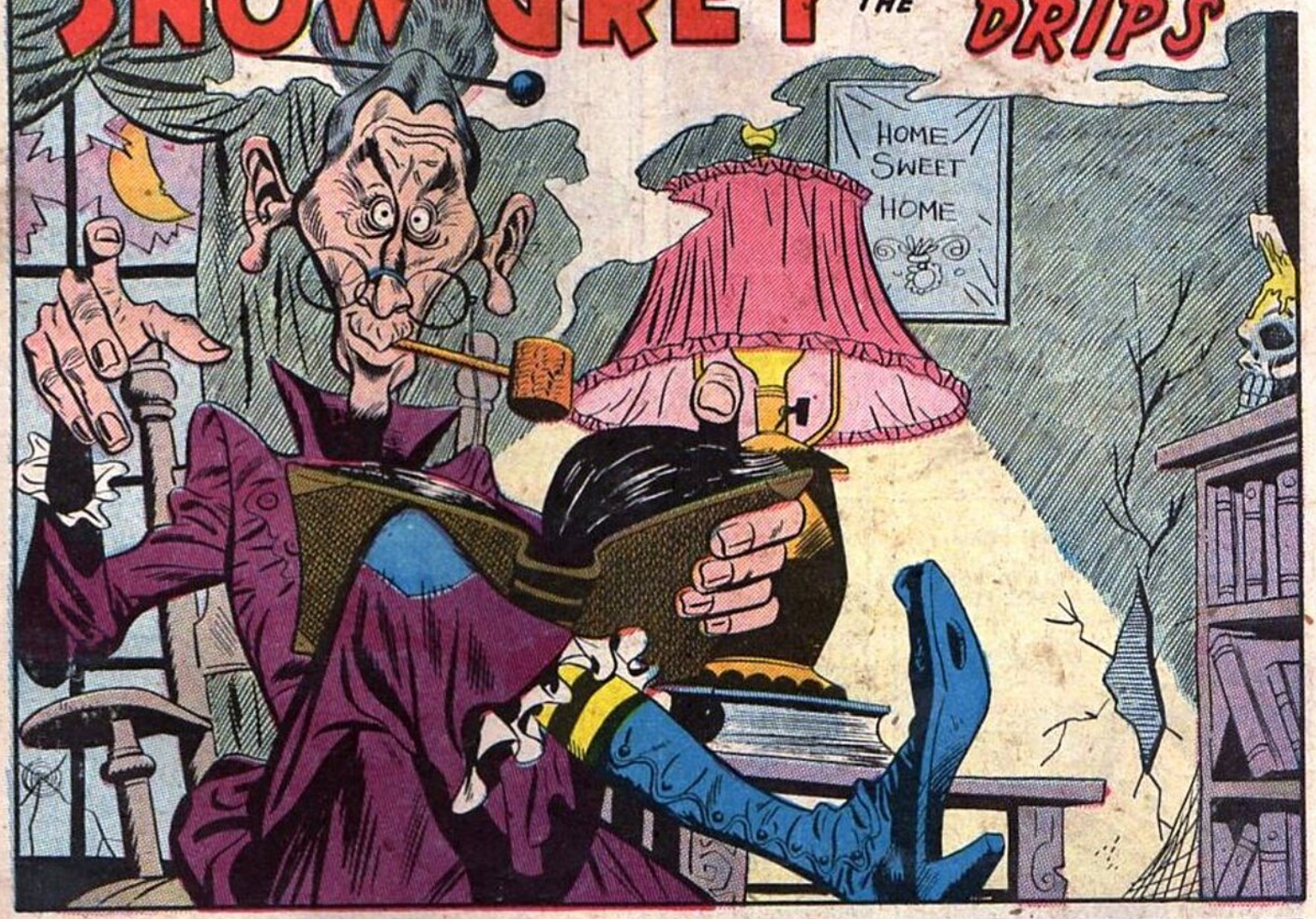
Then Aleena looked deep into his eyes and he knew that in the future all would be well.

IF IT'S A GOOD COMIC, IT'S A PREMIER COMIC! NUTS! the nuttiest humor mag — MASKED RANGER best western adventure— TRUE LOVE CONFESSIONS tops in romance — POLICE AGAINST CRIME great tales of your police crime fighters in action — MYSTERIOUS STORIES tales of the supernatural.

GRANDMA GRUESOME'S DEADTIME STORIES

GREETING, ***FANATICAL FOLLOWERS OF FRENZIED FABLES!*** HEH, HEH, HEH, SO YOU'RE BACK FOR ANOTHER VISIT WITH YOUR ***OLD CRONE, GRANDMA GRUESOME***, EH? WELL, YOU WON'T ***REGRET*** IT, LITTLE CHUMS! GRANNY'S GOING TO SET YOU ***STRAIGHT*** AGAIN ON ONE OF THOSE ***OLD FASHIONED, OUT-DATED*** NURSERY TALES! STICK AROUND AND LEARN THE ***TRUE*** FACTS IN THE CASE OF....

SNOW GREY AND THE SEVEN DRIPS



ONCE UPON A TIME, CHUMS, THERE WAS... AH, NUTS TO THAT CORNY BEGINNING! A COUPLA OF CENTURIES AGO, BEFORE COLOR TV AND MARILYN MONROE, THERE WERE SEVEN DRIPS WHO LIVED IN A GREENERY CALLED THE DIS-ENCHANTED FOREST...

♪ JUST GROAN WHILE YOU WORK... ♫ JUST GROAN AND GRIND... ♪ AND GROAN AND GRIND...

TCH, TCH, TCH, THE SEVEN DRIPS WERE NOT A HAPPY LOT! THEY SLAVED FOR A WICKED AND EVIL MISTRESS FROM DAYLIGHT UNTIL DAWN, BUT EVEN THAT WAS NOT ENOUGH...

HURRY UP, YOU FOOLS! WORK HARDER, ***FASTER*** ... BABY NEEDS A NEW PAIR OF SHOES! ***TOTE THAT BARGE !!***

YES, SNOW GREY!

SNOW GREY AND THE SEVEN DRIPS LIVED IN A HUMBLE SHACK WITHIN THE FOREST, AND AFTER A HARD DAY'S LABOR, THEY SETTLED INTO COMFORTABLE DOMESTICITY...
TAKE THIS REVOLTING FOOD BACK TO THE KITCHEN! WHEN I SAY RARE, I MEAN RARE, YOU IDIOTS!
Y-YES, MA'AM!

BUT LET'S LEAVE THIS HAPPY LITTLE SCENE FOR A MINUTE AND TRAVEL A FEW MILES AWAY TO THE KINGDOM OF UGLINESS WHERE QUEEN HIDEOUS REIGNS...
MIRROR, MIRROR, IN MY HAND, WHO IS THE UGLIEST IN THE LAND?

JUST SO YOU WON'T GET CONFUSED, CHUMS, MAYBE I'D BETTER EXPLAIN THIS CRAZY PHILOSOPHY! IN THE KINGDOM OF UGLINESS, BEAUTY IS UGLY, AND UGLY IS BEAUTY, GET IT?
...WHO IS THE UGLIEST IN THE LAND?
NOT YOU, YOU OLD BAT! IN THE DISENCHANTED FOREST IS A DISH NAMED SNOW GREY! SHE IS THE UGLIEST IN THE LAND!

QUEEN HIDEOUS WAS FURIOUS, MAN! FOR YEARS SHE'D BEEN THE UGLIEST... REAL GEORGE ALL THE WAY... BUT NOW, NOW, THERE WAS A COMPETITOR IN HER MIDST...
IT'S NOT TRUE! NO ONE IS UGLIER THAN I! NO ONE!!
OUCH! FOR PETE'S SAKE, REMEMBER--SEVEN YEARS BAD LUCK!

BUT QUEEN HIDEOUS KNEW THE MIRROR NEVER LIED! IF THE MIRROR SAID SNOW GREY WAS UGLIER, THEN IT WAS THE TRUTH! THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING TO DO--RUB OUT SNOW GREY, NATCH...
AH, HERE IT IS! I'LL WEAR THIS OLD WITCH'S MASK SO NO ONE WILL RECOGNIZE ME!

AND THUS THAT NIGHT, DISGUISED AS AN OLD WITCH, QUEEN HIDEOUS LEFT HER CASTLE AND MADE HER WAY THROUGH THE DISENCHANTED FOREST...
L-LOOK! T-THAT FACE! HIDE YOUR FACES! IT'S TOO HORRIBLE TO BEHOLD!
UGH! SHE'S SICKENING! SHE'S REPULSIVE... SHE USES LAKES!

IT WAS DAYBREAK WHEN THE QUEEN, DISGUISED AS A WITCH, MADE HER WAY UP TO THE DOOR OF SNOW GREY'S MENAGE (THAT'S A HOUSE, STUPID)...
G'WAN, BEAT IT, YOU OLD HAG!
SCRAM! HIT THE ROAD, GIRLIE! TAKE OFF, SISTER!

BUT THE QUEEN WAS A SHARPSTER, AND SHE KNEW SHE COULD GET SNOW GREY'S ATTENTION IF SHE MENTIONED ONE MAGIC WORD... "MONEY"!.

ALL RIGHT I'LL LEAVE, BUT YOU'LL BE SORRY! WITH MY HELP, YOU CAN BE THE RICHEST IN THE LAND!

RICHEST?! MONEY, GELT! LOOT, GREENSTUFF! COLD CASH! MOOLA! WAIT RIGHT THERE, WITCHY OLD GIRL, I'LL BE RIGHT THERE!

♪ MINK SHMINK, SABLE SHMABLE, PEARLS SMEALS, SATIN SHMATIN... ♪ ♫ ♪

SNOW GREY INVITED THE QUEEN TO HAVE BREAKFAST AND THE TWO WOMEN DINED ON SCRAMBLED TOADS AND TOASTED TREE LEAVES...

GAD, IT'S AS THE MIRROR SAID--SHE'S SO UGLY, SO UGLY! BUT WHEN I GET THROUGH, SHE'LL BE BEAUTIFUL!

OKAY, KIDDO, SPILL THE BEANS!! LET'S HEAR IT!

THIS IS IT... THE PRODUCT OF THE CENTURY...MOBURT! JUST ONE COAT OF THIS ON YOUR LOVELY UGLY SKIN AND YOU'LL SEE A MIRACLE!

MOBURT, EH? HUMPH, SILLY NAME... SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING TO EAT!

BUT IN HER QUEST FOR LOOT, SNOW GREY WAS WILLING TO TRY ANYTHING! AFTER BREAKFAST, WITH THE QUEEN'S HELP, SHE RUBBED THE MOBURT ON HER FACE...

THAT'S RIGHT, DEARIE! RUB IT IN GOOD!

SMELLS LIKE STRAWBERRIES! TOO BAD, I'M A VANILLA LOVER MYSELF!

IT WAS ONLY SECONDS LATER WHEN THE MOBURT TOOK EFFECT! THE QUEEN WATCHED WITH DELIGHT AS SNOW GREY'S BEWITCHING UGLINESS CHANGED... AND CHANGED... AND CHANGED... YUP, SNOW GREY WAS REALLY GONE...

OH! NO... NO! I'M BEAUTIFUL! BEAUTIFUL!!

AND THAT AIN'T ALL, SISTER, THERE'S MORE TO COME...

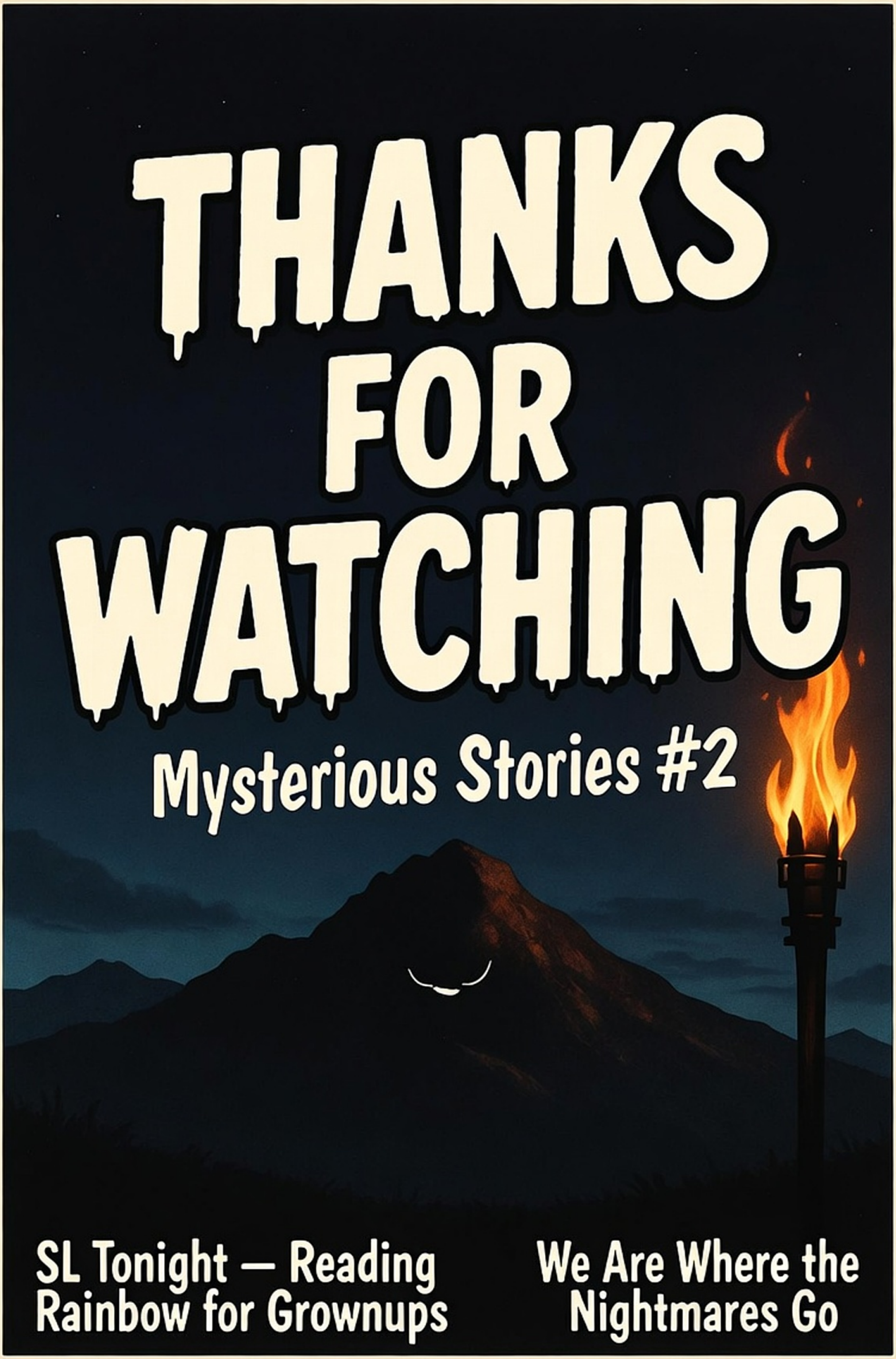
AND MORE THERE WAS! SUDDENLY, SNOW GREY GRABBED HOLD OF HER HEAD AND SLUMPED TO THE FLOOR...

OHNNNNH!!

GET OFF IT, YOU HAM! WHO YOU KIDDING, WHATTA YOU WANT... AN ACADEMY AWARD! SO YOU'RE FAINTING, SO WHAT?

BUT THIS WAS NO ORDINARY FAINT, LITTLE CHUMS! HEAVENS TO BETSY, NO! SNOW GREY FELL INTO A COMMA... (NOT COMMA, YA DOPE! THAT'S PUNCTUATION! COMA! COMA!) ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, ALREADY... FELL INTO A COMA...
YIPES, LOOK AT HER! WHATTA MESS!
YEAH, AND SHE USED TO BE A SLICK CHICK!
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HER?
SHE'S IN A COMMA, ER... COMA! SHE WON'T AWAKEN UNTIL A PRINCE KISSES HER! HA! HA! AND NOW THAT SHE'S REPULSIVE LOOKING, WHO'D KISS HER!
WE'RE FREE!! WE DON'T HAVE TO WORK FOR HER ANYMORE! WE'RE FREE!
THE SEVEN DRIPS AND QUEEN HIDEOUS STARTED OUT THE DOOR AND INTO THE FOREST! IT WAS GOING TO BE QUITE A NIGHT, EVERYBODY WAS GOING TO CELEBRATE...
HI HO, HI HO, IT'S OFF TO PLAY WE GO! IT'S DANCE AND PLAY THE LIVE LONG DAY, HI HO, HI HO!
... AND I AM THE UGLIEST IN THE LAND!
BUT BEFORE THE DRIPS AND THE QUEEN WERE OUT OF EARSHOT, A LOUD, THUNDEROUS ROAR WAS HEARD FROM THE COZY LITTLE SHACK AND THEY TURNED TO SEE...
GET BACK HERE, YOU WORTHLESS LOAFERS! I MAY BE REPULSIVE LOOKING, BUT I'M NOT IN A COMMA...ER... COMA! GET BACK HERE!
OH, NO! NO! MERCY, SNOW GREY, WE WUZ ONLY KIDDING!
THE SEVEN DRIPS, AFRAID, WENT BACK TO THEIR MISTRESS, BUT QUEEN HIDEOUS BEAT IT INTO THE FOREST, CACKLING EVILLY...
HEE, HEE! DON'T CARE WHETHER YOU'RE IN A COMA OR NOT, YOU'LL BE BEAUTIFUL UNTIL A PRINCE KISSES YOU. HEE, HEE!
PRINCE, SMINCE, BEAUTY, SMEAUTY, WHO CARES!
AND SNOW GREY DIDN'T CARE THAT EVERY CITIZEN IN THE VICINITY GAGGED AT THE SIGHT OF HER! WHEN SHE WENT TO THE CITY TO PICK UP SUPPLIES, THE STREETS WERE EMPTIED AT THE FIRST GLIMPSE OF HER BEAUTIFUL FACE...
UGE! DISGUSTING! SICKENING!
EEEEEK THAT FACE!
FOOLS! DON'T YOU KNOW THAT UGLINESS IS ONLY SKIN DEEP?
BUT IT CAME TO PASS THAT ON ONE SUCH TRIP TO TOWN, SNOW GREY WAS SEEN BY A VISITING FOREIGNER, A PRINCE, HARRY PRINCE, BY NAME...
WHOOOOOOEEEEE!!! MAN, DIG THAT DISH! SENSATIONAL, CLEOPATRA AND SALOMEY ROLLED INTO ONE!

THE PRINCE TRAILED SNOW GREY DOWN THE STREET, PLEADING WITH HER, BEGGING HER FOR JUST ONE KISS! THE TOWNSPEOPLE WATCHED FROM BEHIND THEIR DOORS, CONVINCED THAT THE PRINCE WAS A RAVING MADMAN...
MARRY ME, MY BELOVED! FLEE WITH ME... UGGH!
SCRAMM! BUM! I'VE GOT NO TIME FOR THIS STUFF!
MAD AS A HATTER! INSANE!
BUT NOTHING, NEITHER HAIL NOR SNOW, NOR GLOOM OF NIGHT, CAN STOP THE PRINCE FROM HIS APPOINTED TASK...
SNOW GREY, WHY DO YOU FLEE SO? ALL I WANT IS ONE LITTLE KISS!
STAND BACK, BOY! DON'T YOU KNOW I'M UNDER A SPELL THAT CAN BE LIFTED ONLY FROM A KISS BY A PRINCE -- NOT YOU!
BUT WHEN AT LAST THEY REACH THE HUMBLE SHACK, SNOW GREY'S RESISTANCE IS WORN DOWN...
OKAY, STUPID, YOU ASKED FOR IT! PUCKER UP, BOY!
NO, SIRE! DON'T DO IT! NO! NO! NO! NO!
OUT OF MY WAY, YOU LITTLE DRIPS!
THE PRINCE TAKES SNOW GREY INTO HIS STRONG ARMS, TRYING TO IGNORE THE SEVEN DRIPS WHO PULL AT HIM, PLEADING WITH HIM TO STOP BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE...
WE'LL BE SO HAPPY, MY DARLING! WE'LL GO HOME, OPEN UP A GAS STATION! OIL THE WORLD WILL BE OURS!
PRINCE, YOU'LL BE A DRIP!
BEAT IT!
BUT THE WARNINGS FALL ON DEAF EARS AS THE PRINCE GIVES SNOW GREY A BIG SMACKEROO...ROO...ROOO.. WOWWWWW...
BOOOONNGGG!
BUT AS THE PRINCE RELEASED HIS DREAM GIRL, HE NOTED SOMETHING STRANGE...
HEY! WHA HOPPIN ?????
TOO LATE! YOU'RE A DRIP NOW LIKE US! THAT'S THE WAY WE BECAME DRIPS!
POOR PRINCE BECAME SMALLER AND SMALLER.
TCH, TCH, TCH, POOR PRINCE! THE DRIPS WARNED HIM, BUT HE WOULDN'T LISTEN! ONCE AGAIN SNOW GREY'S MAGIC KISS HAD WORKED, AND NOW, INSTEAD OF SEVEN DRIPS, THERE WERE EIGHT...
AH. THESE FOREIGNERS... SUCH DRIPS!
GROAN WHILE YOU GRIND... GROAN WHILE YOU GRIND!
OH, NO, NO! SNOW GREY AND THE EIGHT DRIPS! I'M THE EIGHT DRIP!
THE END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